IN THE CLAIMS:

Please AMEND claims 1, 3, 8, and 11, as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A sheet feeding apparatus comprising:

a sheet supporting stand which supports a bundle of sheets in an erect posture;

a sheet feeding portion which feeds the bundle of sheets supported by said sheet supporting stand;

a pressure portion which thrusts the bundle of sheets toward said sheet feeding portion during feeding by said sheet feeding portion;

an aligning portion which vibrates the bundle of sheets upward and downward and moves the bundle of sheets in a sheet feeding direction while supporting the bundle of sheets at at least two locations of said sheet supporting stand; and

a hitting portion arranged to be hit against the leading edges of the bundle of sheets moved by said aligning portion,

wherein said pressure portion is moved ~~to a position in which said pressure portion does not hinder an aligning operation of said aligning portion~~ so as to weaken a pressing force exerted on the bundle of sheets during the aligning operation of said aligning portion.

2. (Previously Presented) A sheet feeding apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said aligning portion includes vibrating members for vibrating the bundle of sheets by repeatedly lifting at least two locations of a bottom portion of the bundle of sheets.

3. (Currently Amended) A sheet feeding apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said vibrating members are rotary members to be rotated in the sheet feeding direction, and a height of a portion of said rotary members projecting from a surface of said sheet supporting stand is adapted to change in accordance with a rotational angle of said rotary members ~~member~~, and said vibrating members are retracted to a position in which the portion of said rotary members ~~member~~ does not project from the surface of said sheet supporting stand during a non-aligning operation of said aligning portion.

4. (Original) A sheet feeding apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said rotary member has an eccentric cylindrical shape.

5. (Original) A sheet feeding apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said rotary member has a cam shape.

6. (Original) A sheet feeding apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said aligning portion is adapted to remain stationary in a position in which said aligning portion is retracted from said sheet supporting stand, or in a position in which a portion of said aligning portion projects from said sheet supporting stand, when said aligning portion does not align the bundle of sheets.

Claim 7 (Cancelled).

8. (Currently Amended) A sheet feeding apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said hitting portion has a shutter retractable in a direction perpendicular to the sheet feeding direction, and said shutter is moved to a position in which said shutter does not hinder movement of the sheet during sheet feeding operation of said sheet feeding portion, while said shutter is projected into an alignment position to hit against the sheet moved by said aligning portion and block the movement of the sheet during the aligning operation of said aligning portion.

9. (Original) A sheet feeding apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a setting portion arranged to set at least one of operation time of said aligning portion, the number of the vibrations of the bundle of sheets, and a vertical amplitude of the vibrations of the bundle of sheets.

10. (Original) A sheet feeding apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

a detecting portion arranged to detect the amount of the sheets placed on said sheet supporting stand; and

a changing portion arranged to change at least one of operation time of said aligning portion, the number of the vibrations of the bundle of sheets, and a vertical amplitude of the vibrations of the bundle of sheets in accordance with the amount detected by said detecting portion.

11. (Currently Amended) A sheet feeding apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising ~~an instructing~~ a selecting portion ~~arranged to instruct whether or not to execute~~ by which a user selects a mode in which the bundle of sheets aligned by the aligning operation is ~~are~~ not automatically fed by said sheet feeding portion after ~~an~~ the aligning operation by said aligning portion.

12. (Original) A sheet feeding apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a separating portion arranged to separate the sheet one by one from the bundle of sheets after aligning operation by said aligning portion.